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Women's Industrial Council

What has already been done

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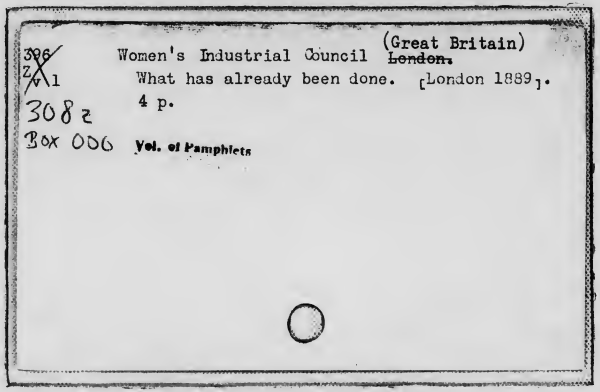


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# Women's Industrial Council,

19, BUCKINGHAM STREET, STRAND, W.C.

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ANEURIN WILLIAMS, ESQ.

**General Secretary.**

MISS WYATT PAPWORTH.

## WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE.

IT was in 1894 that the Women's Industrial Council grew out of the Women's Trade Union Association, which had done such valiant service in the East End since the great Dock Strike of 1889. It was then established on a broader basis, as a body whose aim it should be to watch over women engaged in trades, and all industrial matters which concern women. It has confined itself to this its special duty, leaving to sister societies interest in professional women, in the poor as such, and in children—except in so far as they are occupied in trades.

The aim of the Women's Industrial Council being, then, the improvement of all industrial conditions, whether general or special, in which women are concerned, the Council has had a five-fold task before it.

1. The collection and publication of trustworthy information about the condition of women's work.

2. The watching and preparation of legal and statistical matter of various kinds, Parliamentary Bills, Official Reports, &c.

3. The education of women and girls in social questions, economics, and legislation affecting their trades.

4. The organisation of women's and girls' clubs for social and educational purposes.

5. The training and developing of greater skill in suitable branches of industry, including the revival of the system of apprenticeship in a modified form.

To further these aims, four committees have been formed in the Council. These are: 1. The Investigation; 2. The Legal and Statistical; 3. Education and Technical Training; 4. Organisations.

It is impossible here to do more than outline the work that has been done by these committees.

1. The work of the Investigation Committee forms the basis for all the rest, for nothing at the present day needs such patient, accurate examination as labour questions, and of all such questions none are more difficult to understand and to deal with than those which affect women. In this lies the *raison d'être* of the Council, for without full investigation it is impossible either to legislate or to organise wisely. This Committee, strengthened by volunteers drawn from the Settlements and elsewhere, undertakes from time to time to investigate the actual conditions in one of its chief centres of a given trade in which women are employed. This means visitation, with systematised enquiry of employers, factories, workshops, home-workers, employées, trade union and other officials, and then the drawing-up of a report, with tabulations. Past work has been published by the Council in *Home Industries of Women in London: an Enquiry into Thirty-five Trades*, and from time to time in the *Economic Journal* and the *Industrial News*, the quarterly organ of the Council. During the past year the Committee has investigated the tailoring trade in London, and at the request of a committee of the Economic Section of the British Association it furnished a report on the effect of legislation on women's labour in this trade. The information thus gathered is used in a practical way by the Central Industrial Committee of the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. This new department of the Bureau, which seeks to encourage girls to train for skilled trades at the sacrifice of immediate wages, and to find openings for them in such trades, owes a great deal to the thorough and accurate work of the Committee. Hon. Sec., Mrs. Eates.

2. The Legal and Statistical Committee has two main duties. To remedy general industrial conditions, it has to watch industrial legislation, and, when desirable, get questions put, or amendments drafted to bills, in Parliament. To remedy individual industrial conditions, it has to take up complaints which the Investigation Committee has received and verified, report them to the Factory Inspectors or other authorities, or, where injustice has been done, go to law through its Hon. Solicitors.



The Home Industries Bill promoted by the Council is still before the House. Many breaches of the Factory Acts have been reported to the inspectors. While one of the most useful pieces of work undertaken by the Legal Committee is the recovery of wages. Besides this, it has the general duty of watching all legislation and the action of central and local government bodies, so as to promote amendments or to send petitions or deputations as need arises. Recently it issued a leaflet, for use in Borough Council elections, on the need for women sanitary inspectors, and the conditions under which women are employed by local authorities. Hon. Sec., Mrs. J. R. MacDonald.

3. The Education and Technical Training Committe had, under the late Mrs. F. G. Hogg, the important task of initiating the whole enquiry into the work for wages of school children, which occupied so much time in Parliament last session. An enquiry was made by members of the Council under Mrs. Hogg's direction, the results of which were published by her in the *Nineteenth Century*. Her article—which shewed (*a*) that a very large percentage of school children was employed, often for very long hours; (*b*) that such employment was hardly ever of a kind to give the child any useful training, but on the contrary was often actually demoralising; (*c*) that such employment brought in only low wages—attracted great attention. Sir John Gorst made an enquiry among teachers in public schools, and the returns sent in shewed the evils to be even more aggravated than had been alleged by Mrs. Hogg. The Interdepartmental Committee on the employment of school children was finally the outcome of Mrs. Hogg's efforts. Much evidence was taken, and a Bill drafted which has now become law.

With regard to Technical Training, the Committee has made many recommendations to the Special Committee appointed by the Technical Education Board to enquire into the technical training provided for girls. Among the more important recommendations are:—

i. The establishment of day technical schools, where general education shall be provided in the morning, and training in skilled trades in the afternoon.

ii. The establishment of day schools where girls can obtain practical training in the care and management of children.

iii. The alteration of the existing curriculum of the Domestic Economy schools, so that it may be more generally educational and less specialised, &c.

The Committee has this year published a pamphlet on *Technical Training for Girls at Home and Abroad*, which is of proved value. It also publishes every year a list of lectures and debates on industrial subjects, given free of cost by members

and friends. The audiences vary greatly, from guilds of women co-operators and girls' clubs to debating societies and drawing-room meetings. This part of the work is educational in the strict sense. Hon. Secs., Mrs. J. R. MacDonald and Mrs. H. A. Oakeshott.

4. The Organisations Committee evokes much general interest. It is a large and very busy committee, which is responsible for four organisations, of which the first three deal with working girls' clubs. The Clubs' Industrial Association is an association of thirty-five clubs for the purpose of sharing the industrial lectures and social meetings which the Council arranges for them, and the special citizenship lessons in individual clubs, through which the girls learn their duties and rights as citizens and as employées. This is a growing and fascinating work. The Girls' Club Library is a loan collection of books distributed in large boxes twice a year to any club paying a small fee, and it seems to be very much appreciated. The Physical Drill for working girls, organised by Miss James, is a splendid piece of work which every one ought to see. Lessons are given once or twice a week in any club desiring it, and last May 300 girls, drawn from working girls' clubs all over London, gave a drill display in Queen's Hall, which was a revelation to a large audience. Last, but not least, there is the A.T.C., or Association of Trained Charwomen, an attempt to help one of the most helpless classes in the community by training the women and finding work for them. Employers who have tried the Association find that they are quite as much benefited as the women. Hon. Sec., Mrs. J. L. Hammond.

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*** Applications for Membership, offers of help in some branch of the work, as well as Subscriptions and Donations, however small in amount, will be gratefully acknowledged by the General Secretary. Cheques and Post Office Orders should be crossed "London and Westminster Bank, Temple Bar Branch."

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